Writing Standard Articulated by Grade Level

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Writing Standard Articulated by Grade Level is to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in society as literate citizens. The ability to communicate effectively in writing will be essential to their success in their communities and careers. Students may realize personal fulfillment and enjoyment as they learn to become proficient writers and continue as writers throughout their lives.

Writing is a complex skill that involves learning language and using it effectively to convey meaning through text. This standard recognizes that students' abilities in writing develop from their earliest stages with phonetic spelling; to limited understanding of a certain genre; to the ability to produce conventional, coherent, unified documents. Their ideas are expressed in various forms, such as notes, lists, letters, journal writing, stories, web postings, instant messaging, essays, and reports. Effective writing may be evaluated by examining the use of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

The Writing Standard Articulated by Grade Level will provide a clear delineation of what students need to know and be able to do at each grade level. This allows teachers to better plan instructional goals for students at any grade.

BACKGROUND

The state Board of Education adopted the Arizona Academic Standards in 1996 to define what Arizona's students need to know and be able to do by the end of twelfth grade. Developed by committees comprised of educators, parents, students, and business and community leaders, these standards were written in grade-level clusters with benchmarks at grades 3, 5, 8, and high school.

RATIONALE

Requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the standard practice of conducting periodic review of the state academic standards prompted the decision by the Arizona Department of Education to refine and articulate the academic standards for mathematics, reading, writing, and science by grade level. This refinement and articulation project was started in December 2003, and was completed in June 2004.

METHODOLOGY

Writing Standard refinement began in January 2004, expanding the standard to include performance objectives for all grade levels, kindergarten through twelfth grade. The writing articulation teams consisted of educators from around the state, representing large and small schools, rural and urban schools, and ethnic diversity. National consultants, university professors, and Arizona Department of Education staff advised the teams. The goal was to articulate and align the current academic standards by grade level (K-12).

The Writing Articulation Committee utilized resources and information from current, effective classroom practices, from other states' standards, and from the National Council of Teachers of English, which promotes quality literacy instruction.

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The articulation process included a restructuring of the Arizona Academic Content Writing Standards to better facilitate the alignment of performance objectives by grade level, while maintaining the content integrity.

Over a period of months, the articulation team and smaller subcommittees of the teams refined the documents. Reasonableness, usefulness, and appropriateness were the guidelines for the articulation process.

External reviews by nationally recognized consultants brought a broad perspective to the articulation process. Internal reviews by university and local experts provided additional validation.

Another important step in the project was the request for public comment. In May 2004, a draft of the Writing Standard Articulated by Grade Level, along with a survey to gather feedback, was posted on the Arizona Department of Education website. This provided the public with easy access to the documents, and the survey allowed reviewers a means for submitting comments. The public and all educators had the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions, either electronically or in writing, until the public review closing date of May 27, 2004. In May, three public hearings were held throughout the state, offering further opportunities for public input.

Based on public comment and online survey results, the articulation team met to determine necessary modifications to the standard. All public comments were given equal consideration.

Included in the standard articulation process the development of a rationale, glossary, and a crosswalk (correlation between the 1996 Writing Standard and revised, articulated standard). These additional documents were designed to assist educators with the transition from the 1996 Writing Standards to the 2004 Writing Standard Articulated by Grade Level.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WRITING STANDARD

The Writing Standard is divided into three strands: Writing Process, Writing Elements, and Writing Applications. Each strand is divided into concepts that broadly define the skills and knowledge that students are expected to know and demonstrate in writing. Performance objectives within each concept more specifically delineate the tasks to be taught and learned.

The organization of the Writing Standard does not imply that the teaching and learning of writing should be fragmented or compartmentalized. The order of the strands, concepts, and performance objectives are not intended to be a progression or hierarchy of literacy instruction, with individual performance objectives taught in isolation. Effective instruction incorporates multiple performance objectives into an integrated experience of learning for the student.

A balanced approach to implementing the Writing Standard recognizes that not all skills and knowledge receive equal emphasis at all times. As students progress as maturing writers, emphasis of concepts or performance objectives will vary to meet their changing needs.

The itemized portions of the performance objectives, shown with lettering, provide the specific content that is to be learned by students as part of the outcome of the performance objective.

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The format of this itemized list does not imply that all components must be taught in one lesson or in any particular order. Teachers should decide how best to organize the content to fit the needs of their students.

An *e.g.* in a performance objective indicates a non-exhaustive list of examples provided as options; other examples may be appropriate but are not included. Teachers may use these examples or others of their own choosing. In contrast, an *i.e.* precedes a specific list of items in which all of the items should be included in instruction.

Due to the nature of the content, some performance objectives are repeated in subsequent grade levels. It is understood that the complexity, depth, and difficulty of the performance objective's content will increase from one grade level to the next.

It is recommended that educators view the Writing Standard as a continuum across all grade levels. If students lack proficiency in skills from previous grades, remediation should occur prior to addressing related grade level objectives Likewise, students who demonstrate proficiency of grade level objectives may be challenged with subsequent grade level expectations. Therefore, the Writing Standard format is designed to allow each educator easy access to the performance objectives of preceding, current, and subsequent grade levels.

Strand One: Writing Process

Research has established the major steps of the writing process. These steps are identified in the five concepts of this strand, each supported with specific performance objectives. While all steps are needed and used by effective writers as they compose text, different skills may be emphasized in individual assignments. These steps may be used recursively as a piece moves toward completion. Throughout the process, students should reflect on their own writing skills, set goals, and evaluate their own progress.

Concept 1: Prewriting
Prewriting includes using strategies to generate, plan, and organize ideas for specific purposes.

Concept 2: Drafting
Drafting incorporates prewriting activities to create a first draft containing necessary elements for a specific purpose.

Concept 3: Revising
Revising includes evaluating and refining the rough draft for clarity and effectiveness. (Ask: Does this draft say what you want it to say?)

Concept 4: Editing
Editing includes proofreading and correcting the draft for conventions.

Concept 5: Publishing
Publishing includes formatting and presenting a final product for the intended audience.

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Strand 2: Writing Elements

This strand focuses on the elements of effective writing. Good writing instruction incorporates multiple performance objectives into an integrated experience of learning for the student. . Throughout the process, students should reflect on their own writing skills, set goals, and evaluate their own progress. The order of the concepts and performance objectives is not intended to indicate a progression or hierarchy for writing instruction. Instructional activities may focus on just one concept or many.

Concept 1: Ideas and Content
Writing is clear and focused, holding the reader's attention throughout. Main ideas stand out and are developed by strong support and rich details. Purpose is accomplished.

Concept 2: Organization
Organization addresses the structure of the writing and integrates the central meaning and patterns that hold the piece together.

Concept 3: Voice
Voice will vary according to the type of writing, but should be appropriately formal or casual, distant or personal, depending on the audience and purpose.

Concept 4: Word Choice
Word choice reflects the writer's use of specific words and phrases to convey the intended message and employs a variety of words that are functional and appropriate to the audience and purpose.

Concept 5: Sentence Fluency
Fluency addresses the rhythm and flow of language. Sentences are strong and varied in structure and length.

Concept 6: Conventions
Conventions addresses the mechanics of writing, including capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar and usage, and paragraph breaks.

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Strand 3: Writing Applications

Writing skills particular to the applications listed here may be taught across the curriculum, although some applications may lend themselves more readily to specific content areas. It is imperative that students write in all content areas in order to increase their communication skills, and ultimately to improve their understanding of content area concepts. When appropriate, other content standards are referenced to show interdisciplinary connections.

Concept 1: Expressive
Expressive writing includes **personal narratives**, stories, poetry, songs, and dramatic pieces. Writing may be based on real or imagined events.

Concept 2: Expository
Expository writing includes nonfiction writing that describes, explains, informs, or summarizes ideas and content. The writing supports a **thesis** based on research, observation, and/or experience.

Concept 3: Functional
Functional writing provides specific directions or information related to real-world tasks. This includes letters, memos, schedules, directories, signs, manuals, forms, recipes, and technical pieces for specific content areas.

Concept 4: Persuasive
Persuasive writing is used for the purpose of influencing the reader. The author presents an issue and expresses an opinion in order to convince an audience to agree with the opinion or to take a particular action.

Concept 5: Literary Response
Literary response is the writer's reaction to a literary selection. The response includes the writer's interpretation, analysis, opinion, and/or feelings about the piece of literature and selected elements within it.

Concept 6: Research
Research writing is a process in which the writer identifies a topic or question to be answered. The writer locates and evaluates information about the topic or question, and then organizes, summarizes, and synthesizes the information into a finished product

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Coding for Articulated Standards

Subject: Writing — Strand 1 — Performance Objective 2 — Grade Level: Kindergarten — Concept 2

W00-S1C2-02
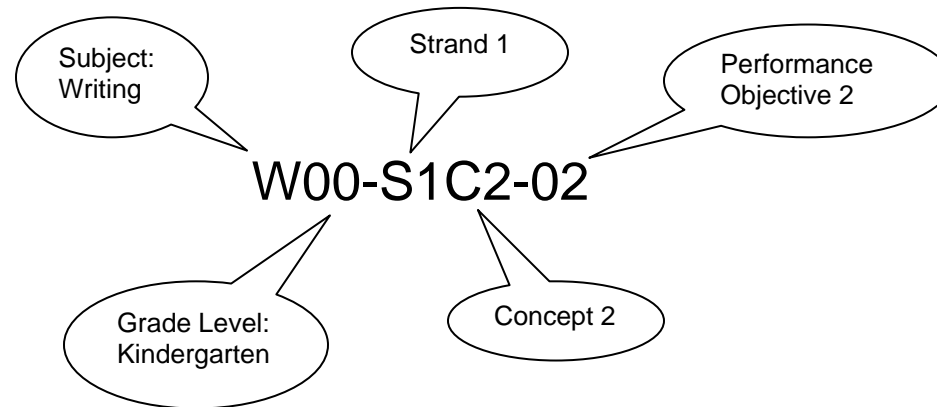
Examples of Writing items:

W04-S3C1-03 (Grade 4, Strand 3, Concept 1, PO 3)

W09-S2C2-01 (Grade 9, Strand 2, Concept 2, PO 1)

Cross-curricular references are provided in the Writing Standard where appropriate. Examples of coding for other subjects are shown below:

Examples of Mathematics item:

M01-S2C1 (Grade 1, Strand 2, Concept 1)

MHS-S5C1-01 (High School, Strand 5, Concept 1, PO 1)

Examples of Reading items:

R07-S2C1 (Grade 7, Strand 2, Concept 1)

R05-S3C1-04, -05, -06 (Grade 5 Strand 3, Concept 1, POs 4, 5, and 6)